

New rules for professional education

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On 12 March 2015, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted a new Act No. 61/2015 Coll. on Professional Education and Preparation amending certain acts (the "Act"). Most of the provisions of the Act have been effective as of 1 April 2015 and the remaining part will become effective on 1 September 2015.

The legislative adoption of the Act was accompanied by lively discussions and negotiations between employers, professional associations and representatives of the Slovak Republic.

Background

The Act substitutes the former Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Professional Education and Preparation as amended (the "Former Act"). According to the legislator, despite the fact that the former Act established conditions for employers to help shape professional education and preparation, employers were not sufficiently motivated to do so. One of the reasons for this may have been that they were not aware of the options that were introduced by the Former Act and did not have enough information regarding the benefits that would result from their involvement in professional education and preparation.

When preparing the draft Act, the Ministry of Education of the

Slovak Republic was inspired by the experiences of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, where the dual system of professional education helps to guarantee the functioning of the economy in these countries, and in the European area as a whole. The transfer of this positive experience was considered essential for the development of the Slovak economy, which is primarily linked to the economies of the above-stated states, either due to the volume of exports or the number of companies from these states which are based in Slovakia.

Main goals and scope of the new legislation

The aim of the Act is to establish the basis for a new comprehensive regulation of professional education as a whole and preparation in specialized secondary schools. The Act sets out, inter alia, a system for professional education and the preparation of specialized secondary school students, the types of these schools, practical training of students, a system of dual education, verification of an employer's capacity for the provision of practical training as regards dual education

and other relevant instruments required for the fulfilment of the outlined goal of the Act.

The Act introduces comprehensive changes to the system of professional education and preparation, and amends several underlying acts, such as the Slovak Labor Code and the Slovak Education Act, as well as special acts governing the existence and operation of various professional associations and chambers, such as the Slovak Trade Licensing Association.

System of dual education and responsibilities of the employer

The existing system of professional education was criticized by employers as graduates of specialized secondary schools often did not meet employers' requirements. Therefore, systems that are successfully operating in the German-speaking countries have been introduced. Specifically, the dual education system will provide the student with professional education and preparation on the basis of a contract for dual education concluded between the employer and the specialized secondary school, the subject of which will be the employer's obligation to provide students with practical training, and bear the costs of and take full responsibility for such training. The school will be obliged to organize the professional education and preparation. In addition, the employer is also entitled to conclude a so-called "teaching contract" directly with the student, under which the employer will be obliged to prepare the student for a profession, group of professions, or for the performance of professional activities at the

workplace of practical training. The student will be obliged to attend practical training at the employer's premises in line with the employer's specific needs and requirements.

Thus, when compared with the previous system, the employer will now be able to take part in the process of professional education, and will also bear the full responsibility for this process.

Employer's capacity

The legislator's intention is to establish a systematic procedure for the verification of an employer's capacity to provide practical training for professional associations and chambers. Each professional association will verify this capacity in the respective field of study and training which falls within its competence. The professional associations will remain free in terms of the establishment of a more detailed verification procedure, according to their particular needs and professional orientation.

Executive summary

In general, the Act seeks to establish a basis for a new comprehensive regulation of professional education as a whole, and preparation in specialized secondary schools. The new rules are intended to capitalize on the positive experience of states such as Germany or Austria, which have introduced a dual system of education. Based on specific contracts concluded either with a specialized secondary school or directly with its students, the employers will be obliged to provide the students with practical training, and bear the costs and take full responsibility for such training.

